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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Terry Goddard Meets with Top Air Force Officials to Voice Support for Luke AFB

(Phoenix, Ariz. – Dec. 9, 2008) Attorney General Terry Goddard and Peoria Mayor Bob Barrett met with top U.S. Air Force officials at the Pentagon today.

The delegation met with Michael Donley, Secretary of the U.S. Air Force, General Norton Schwartz, Chief of Staff of the U.S. Air Force, and numerous other Air Force officials to explain state and local efforts to protect Luke AFB from encroachment as well as express support of the base as the future home of the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter.

"We had a positive and productive discussion with Secretary Donley and General Schwartz," Goddard said of the meeting. "In addition to briefing Air Force officials on state and local requirements put into effect to protect the base, we made it clear that Luke and its current and future missions have overwhelming support across Arizona."

"Secretary Donley and General Schwartz are very aware of activities occurring both on the base and in the surrounding community," Barrett said. "Today's meeting provided a critical opportunity to demonstrate to top military officials that the West Valley cities' are firmly committed to the base and its airmen."

Glendale Mayor Elaine Scruggs and Surprise Mayor Lyn Truitt were unable to attend today's meeting in person. Goddard presented Secretary Donley and General Schwartz with letters from Scruggs and Truitt stating their cities' support of Luke AFB.

Luke AFB is currently a finalist in the Air Force's review to determine which bases will become primary training facilities for pilots of the F-35, the Air Force fighter scheduled to replace the F-16 in approximately 10 years. Barrett said that he and other West Valley leaders are "dedicated to securing the F-35 and guaranteeing the mission viability of Luke AFB over the next 40 years."

In August 2008, Goddard, on behalf of the State of Arizona and the Adjutant General of Arizona, filed a lawsuit in Maricopa County Superior Court asking the Court to require Maricopa County to take steps mandated by state law to protect Luke Air Force Base, Luke Aux 1 and Gila Bend Air Force Auxiliary Field from further development.

The suit alleges that Maricopa County, by refusing to follow state law, has threatened the public health and safety and has endangered the economic well-being of the state. According to the suit, state law requires each county to adopt general land use plans and enforce zoning regulations that assure development that is compatible with the high noise and accident potential of military airport operations.

“Yesterday’s crash of a Marine fighter jet in San Diego is an unfortunate reminder that ensuring development that is compatible with the accident risk around Luke AFB is critical for the safety of the base, its student pilots and the surrounding community,” Goddard said. “I look forward to resolving this lawsuit and moving forward to protect Luke and its neighbors in the West Valley.”

A hearing on the case is scheduled for January 30 in Maricopa County Superior Court.

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